

Invasive Plants in Pennsylvania

Golden Bamboo

Phyllostachys aurea



James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service
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Background:

Golden bamboo, an enormous member of the grass family *Poaceae*, was introduced into the United States in 1882, specifically in Alabama. Property owners commonly turn to this aggressive plant when needing a visual screen or noise barrier in their yards. It is readily available from commercial nurseries

Range:

Golden bamboo is native to Southeast China. Unfortunately, it can now also be found throughout the Mid-Atlantic and Southeastern regions of the United States.

Description:

At a maximum height of 30 to 40 feet, golden bamboo towers over most other grasses. The hollow culms (stems) are initially green, turning yellow when exposed to sunlight. The evergreen, lanceolate leaves may be rough or smooth. Golden bamboo flowers infrequently, perhaps every seven to 12 years.



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Habitat:

Golden bamboo thrives in full sun, but will grow well in sparsely wooded secondary forests. The most vigorous growth occurs in moist, deep, loamy soils, where this bamboo spreads rapidly. Golden bamboo will still flourish in less than ideal habitats, although at a diminished rate.

Biology and Spread:

Golden bamboo spreads predominately through vegetative growth. It is a fast-growing species and expands quickly by underground rhizomes. Despite containment efforts, it will often find its way out of confinement to infest nearby areas.

Ecological Threat:

Due to the thick, tall nature of the colonies it produces, golden bamboo virtually eliminates all understory plants that stand in its way. In effect, it leaves little appropriate habitat for wildlife, sharply decreasing biodiversity. Once established in an area, it is quite difficult to remove.



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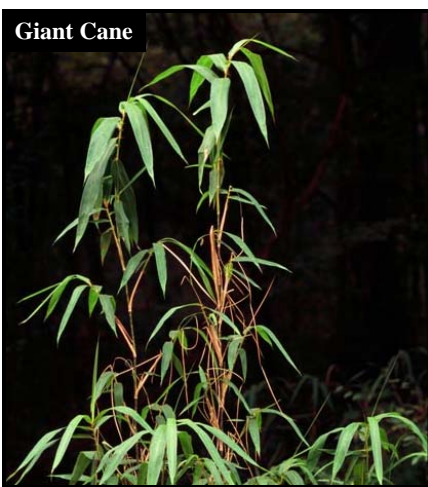
How to Control this Species:

Physical

Small infestations, or areas where herbicides are not permitted, can be controlled mechanically by cutting and mowing. Cut plants as close to the ground as possible. This management technique will need to be repeated several times throughout the growing season since bamboo readily re-sprouts. Monitoring and retreatment over the course of several growing seasons is essential in order to ensure that energy reserves in the rhizomes are exhausted.

Look-A-Likes:

Golden bamboo looks similar to our native giant cane, which grows throughout the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast.



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Chemical

Large areas of bamboo, where risks to non-target species are minimal, can be treated with foliar applications of five percent glyphosate mixed in water. Canes should first be cut and herbicides applied to newly expanded leaves.

Alternatively, a 25 percent solution of glyphosate mixed in water can be applied to freshly cut stumps.

Native Alternatives:

Dense native shrubs and grasses make excellent natural screens. For similarly interesting foliage, try scouring rush horsetail (*Equisetum hyemale* var. *affine*). Giant cane (*Arundinaria gigantea*) is another option.



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References:

Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health:

<http://www.invasive.org/browse/subinfo.cfm?sub=3063>

Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council:

<http://dnr.state.il.us/stewardship/cd/eppc/phau1.html>

USDA Forest Service:

<http://www.invasive.org/weedcd/pdfs/wow/golden->

For More Information:

DCNR Invasive Species Site: <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/conservationscience/invasivespecies/index.htm>

Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas, National Park Service:
<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/pubs/midatlantic/midatlantic.pdf>